Silverline: Reimagining student mental health and wellbeing conversations at the University of Otago
Sze-En Watts, Maddi Mitchell & Amal Abdullahi, University of Otago

Silverline Otago is a student-led, student focused mental health and wellbeing initiative aiming to challenge the struggle that can be student mental health and wellbeing. Silverline aims to engage the University of Otago student body in the conversation around mental health and wellbeing in creative, unexpected ways and perhaps more importantly, in a way relevant to the student community.

Silverline was initially proposed as a pilot initiative for just six months of 2017 during which time we challenged the student community to “show they give a sh*t” about their mental health and wellbeing. What we quickly realised was that students already gave a damn about their and their friend’s mental health, they were just looking for an opening into the conversation and a place to show it.

Silverline is not your typical mental health and wellbeing initiative and the team is not made up of your typical experts in the field. Instead the initiative is driven by the very people who make up the age group that has the highest suicide rate (as per the most recent statistics) in New Zealand. The Silverline student leads are therefore driven by the knowledge that their friends and themselves could be a part of this statistic.

Through this presentation we would like to share with you our Silverline story so far as to what happens when you let students take the mental health and wellbeing conversation into their own hands. Our story has unexpected characters, surprising successes, mini-stories embedded within, and so far, no end.

**Learning outcomes**

Through this presentation, we hope to challenge the audience to
- Have courage in letting students join in taking the lead on mental health and wellbeing initiatives
- Consider how they might ‘challenge the struggle’ within their communities
- Imagine what kind of story you want students to be telling about mental health and wellbeing at your institution.

**Presenters**

Maddi Mitchell, University of Otago

Maddi is a 4th year student, studying public health at Otago University and is the Programme Activator at the Social Impact Studio. In between studying, working and promoting positive mental health through Silverline - a student-led mental health and wellbeing initiative, you’ll catch her planting the odd tree, indulging in too much lollie cake, and wave watching her way through life. Maddi is here to share the Silverline story and to challenge how we define mental health promotion in a student space.

Amal Abdullahi, University of Otago

Amal Abdullahi plays the role of International Student Wellbeing Lead at the Social Impact Studio. Amal weaves the wellbeing struggles of international students into the Silverline context and looks into how we can challenge the struggle in different ways.